

How Hyperpowers Rise to Global Dominance

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We are delighted to have a marvelous scholar who has written a most insightful book, please join me in welcoming our guest to night Amy Chua. Thanks so much and thank you all for coming this evening, it's a great pleasure and honor for me to be here at the Decatur Library and I would like to offer special things to Bill Star and Joe David for inviting me and including me in this I think really amazing and unique program.

So as instructed my plan is to speak for exactly thirty minutes and I thought that I would just start by presenting the main thesis of my book with it I am sure you noticed modest subtitle 'How hyper powers raised in global dominance and why they fall' and I would try to illustrate that thesis with specific examples from the Ancient Persian Empire founded in 550 BC to the great Mogul Empire of the 13th century to the British Empire, I will then shift by focus back to today's hyper power the United States at least for the time being and say something briefly about the implication of my thesis for the 21st century and then we will open things out for questions.

So let me begin by taking you back to 1999 for me it seems like ages ago when in a fit of frustration and anger Frances Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine declared that the United states had become the worlds single hyper power, dominant in all categories, militarily, technologically and culturally and that this was unacceptable to France. Although Vedrine met hyper power

as an attack inquiring that term he actually captured a historical development of fundamental importance and that's what this book is about, not just empires or great powers or even super powers but the much rare phenomenon of hyper powers, there are remarkably few societies and I assert barely more than a handful in all of history that a mass such extraordinary economic and military might that they basically dominated the world. Who were histories hyper powers and what if anything can they tell us about our own times, well it took me over five years to come, to my own answers to these questions and what I found is a remarkable pattern and that is that for all their enormous differences every hyper power in history was strikingly tolerant and pluralistic during its rise to preeminence, at least judged by the standards of the time. In deed in every case tolerance was indispensable to the achievement of hegemony, conversely the decline of hyper powers has repeated coincided with intolerance and xenophobia but here is the catch, it was also too much tolerance in a sense that so deseeds of decline. Now I know there are so big claims so let me just clarify some of the terms that I am using, one of the biggest challenges I faced to define a hyper power, especially given that the world was so much larger two thousand or even five hundred years ago before plane, ships and technology drastically shrunk it. So for example Rome in its hay day for example was clearly a hyper power, I mean if Rome wasn't a hyper power then there was never been a hyper power and yet have we across the world coexisting,

they have existed another great empire, Yuan Dynasty China with which Rome had virtually had no contact, then I was thinking to myself that if the point is that Rome was dominant in the world it knew and inhabited then weren't the Aztecs dominant in their world, the Egyptians in theirs isn't even Tahiti a hyper power in its own little world, well any definition that includes Tahiti as a global hegemon is clearly too broad but what is the right definition, what exactly differentiates Rome from say the Aztecs who at one point dominated Central America but who could never be considered a world hyper power.

Well several factors are obvious first the sheer size of the Roman Empire, two million square miles as compared to seventy seven thousand square miles for the Aztecs also the immense population that Rome ruled about sixty million as compared to just one million for the Aztecs and finally and maybe most important the fact that no power on earth was economically or militarily superior to Rome during its golden age, in short Rome didn't merely achieve dominance in its world, it achieved dominance in the world. Accordingly, in my book I consider a nation or empire a hyper power only if it satisfies all three of the following conditions, one its economic and military strength clearly surpasses that of all its known contemporaneous rivals. Two it isn't clearly inferior in economic and military strength to any other power on the planet known to it or not and three it projects its power over so vast an area of the globe and over so immense of population that it breaks the balance of mere local or even reach no preeminence so for example the United States during the Cold War was not a hyper power because back then it had a formidable rival the former Soviet Union of roughly comparable strength. Now in a moment I will tell you which societies I think do qualify

as hyper powers but let me first say something about why tolerance is so vital to world dominance, there is actually a simple explanation. To be world dominant not just regional or locally dominant but world dominant, a society has to be at the forefront of the world's technological military and economic frontier and at any given historical moment the most valuable human capital that the world has to offer whether in the form of intelligence, physical strength, skill, knowledge, drive, creativity the world's most valuable human capital is never going to be found within any one ethnic group or any one religious group. To pull away from its rivals on a global scale a society must pull into itself and motivate the world's best and widest regardless of ethnicity, religion or background, this is what every hyper power in history has done and the way they have done is through tolerance.

Now some of you must be thinking if you are listening to my introduction wait a second, didn't she mention the Mongols, she thinks the Mongols were tolerant, Genghis Khan's ravaging hordes who slaughtered entire villages and then use the corpses as moat fill, who poured molten silver to the eyes and ears of their enemies, can the Mongols or the British empire with its colonialism and white man's burden really be described as tolerance, well my answer is yes but that's because the kind of tolerance I am talking about is not tolerance in the modern human rights sense. By tolerance I don't mean equality or even respect rather as I would use the term tolerance simply means letting lots of different kinds of people even if you don't especially like or respect them, work, live, prosper and rise in your society even if only for instrumental reasons. To be a little more formal I will use tolerance to refer to the degree of freedom with which individuals

of different ethnic religious racial linguistic or other backgrounds are permitted to coexist participate and rise in society.

Note then that the tolerance as I am using, the term is a relative concept, what matters isn't what the society is tolerant by some absolute universal standard but just whether its more tolerant than its rivals, this is like the old, old joke about the two friends who go hiking and suddenly discovered that they are being chased by a bear.

One of the friends immediately sits down and starts putting on his running shoes and his friend quickly says are you crazy you will never outrun the bear, to which the first friend replies I don't have to outrun the bear, I just have to outrun you! Similarly in the 19th century in the United States there was plenty of anti-semitism and racism, but for the Jews who were fleeing programs in Europe America was a relative heaven and land of opportunity that's what I mean by relative tolerance.

One final clarification to avoid any misunderstanding, my thesis is not that more tolerance always leads to more prosperity, sadly plenty of intolerant societies have become very rich and powerful, not the Nazi Germany as a case in point, rather my thesis is much narrower its just that tolerance is necessary for world dominance that is to be a hyper power, now whether it's a good thing or not to be a hyper power or whether its good for the world to have a hyper power is another question which we can come back to.

Let me now turn to some concrete examples beginning with the hyper powers of antiquity, basically in ancient times tolerance was the only way to build the largest most powerful military, I don't know if you guys saw the movie 'Three Hundred' but, if you limit your army to say only pure blooded Spartans your army is

only going to be so big and maybe bigger than three hundred but its going to be inherently limited in size by contrast if you open up your military to warriors of any race or background you can amass a really huge army the world is your limit and this is exactly what the Achaemenid Persians did founded in 550 BC by Cyrus the Great, Achaemenid Persia was histories first hyper power. In terms of size it dwarfed and in fact conquered and annexed their kingdoms of Assyria, Babylonia, Mesopotamia and Egypt as well as the Greek City States at its peak the empire covered over two million square miles and ruled forty million people nearly a third of the worlds population, how could a relatively small number of Persians conquer and govern so vast territory in population through tolerance, in contrast of rival kings who usually destroyed local cults of conquered peoples and to show their power try to impose their own deities on their subjects Cyrus the Great did just the opposite, he and his successors were famous for their willingness to let conquered peoples worship their own gods and follow their own laws and customs, their policy upon conquest was basically to remove the number one guy the existing king usually stick him in a nice palace somewhere and replace him with a Persian governor or satrap but below that satrap to allow local elites to retain their positions of authority and just to interfere very little with the daily lives of conquered subjects. Now in addition to making conquered peoples more complaint the most crucial benefit the Achaemenid kings derived through this kind of strategic tolerance was that it allowed them to build the largest war machine ever known to man.

The Achaemenid army was a colossal multinational force drawing its strength for Greek mercenaries, Venetian sailors, Libyan charioteers and hundreds of thousands of fit soldiers from Ethiopia, Bactria, Sogdiana and elsewhere in the empire. After the fall of the Achaemenid empire around 330 BC which by the way was accompanied by intensifying brutality and intolerance the world did not see another hyper power for another 400 years until Rome's high empire is the second century AD, now I am actually going to surprise you and I am not going to talk about Rome, partly because so many other people have, instead I just want to make two points, first Rome far exceeded Achaemenid Persia in its tolerance, like the Persians Rome built its massive unrivaled military, by incorporating warriors and foot soldiers from every nation, but Rome went so much further whereas all the Achaemenid kings and virtually all of its Governors were Persians, there was no ethnic sealing in Rome, the Romans permitted educated men of any race or nationality to rise to the very highest positions of authority including even the position of emperor itself, the Emperor Septimius Severus for example was a North African married to a Syrian. Second point about Rome again unlike the Persians Rome combined its tolerance with an uncanny ability to Romanize, without coercion Rome managed to make foreign peoples up and down the empire from Scotland to Spain to Algeria feel Roman and to think of themselves as Roman and identify proudly with the empire. Now, later I will talk a little bit about how Rome did this with some serious implications for the United States. Rome lasted longer than any other hyper power in history but it too eventually fell, among the many causes of Rome's fall one of the most important was Rome's

sharp turn to intolerance both religious and ethnic.

In 312 AD for a reason still debated the Emperor Constantine converted to Christianity and the Roman empire so long famed for its religious openness embarked on an intensifying wave of persecutions as Montesquieu later wrote, unlike the ancient Romans who fortified their empire by tolerating every cult their successors reduced the empire to nothing by cutting out one after the other all the sex incompatible with the dominant one.

At the same time Rome's ethnic tolerance was pushed beyond its breaking point, by the influx of large populations of dramatic Barbarians from the north who were viewed as assemblable, the Romans were frightened and disgusted by these Vandals Goths Visigoths and other Germans,

I actually there are some parallels with our immigration debate here in the United States particularly over immigration from Mexico but in any event the Romans were repelled by their smell and their huge beastly limbs and by the ranted butter they smeared in their yellow hair.

For the first time Rome adopted apartheid policies barring intermarriage and segregating the Germans who were subjected to growing hostility, violence and even massacres.

The Germans reacted with their vengeance, in the fifth century Germanic Tribes sacked Rome overran Gaul, took Carthage and North Africa and sacked Rome again.

By 476 the Western Roman Empire was no more, now in my book I discussed two other pre modern hyper powers, Tang Dynasty China and the great Mongol Empire and for lack of time let me just talk very briefly about the latter which for me is the most fascinating case. The Mongols were nomads even

their leaders or cons were illiterate, they had no science, no engineering, no written language of their own, they had no architecture, they lived in yurts or tents made of the felt of yaks, they did not even have the technology to bake bread and yet the Mongols came to rule over an empire far larger than the Romans ever conquered, half the known world including the most magnificent cities of the time Baghdad, Ukara, Kiev, Moscow, Damascus and Samarkand how did the Mongols do this?

Again through tolerance.

First Genghis Khan the founder of the empire deliberately and quite ingeniously overcame the clan and tribal animosities that had divided the people of the Mongolians after hundreds of years uniting them under a single identity the people of the felt walls.

From there Genghis Khan sorry, in this way he put together an interethnic army large enough to conquer Northern China, from there Genghis Khan shrewdly recruited men from the conquered populations with the skills and technologies the Mongols themselves lacked, most critically Genghis Khan drew into his service large numbers of Chinese engineers who knew how to construct the most powerful siege engines of the day with portable towers, retractable ladders and massive catapults that hurled stones at flaming liquids, sort of have to think 'Lord of the rings' for that.

It was only by incorporating foreign engineers who traveled with the Mongol army and often built instruments of attack right on the spot that the Mongols were able to overcome the great walled cities of Central Asia, Persia and Eastern Europe.

For all their ruthlessness and battle the Mongols were far more religiously tolerant than any other contemporaneous power,

while Christian Europe was burning heretics of the stake Genghis Khan himself an animist believed in nature declared religious freedom for all of the subject peoples and the Mongol armies included Buddhist, Muslims and Christians of every set. In the end different parts of the Mongol empire collapsed at different times but everywhere decline was accompanied by a start turn to ethnic and religious intolerance. By 1300 the Mongol cons of Russia and Persia had converted to Islam and they became increasingly phonetic in their persecution of non Muslims. In China the latter Mongol rulers grew more and more paranoid and anti Chinese with one Mongol minister towards the end of the dynasty proposing that all individuals surnamed Cheng, Wang, Liu, Lee and Chal will be executed this plan would have eliminated ninety percent of Chinese population but before it can be carried out the Mongols were sent fleeing back to the step by the new Ming Chinese rulers. This brings us to the end of the pre modern hyper powers, the next society arguably to attain global dominance was amazingly the tiny Dutch public of the 17th century.

The secret to Hollands stunning success was once again tolerance, but now tolerance of a radically new kind. After the fall of Rome in 476 came the rise of a great religious empires those of Christianity and Islam, unlike the ancient polytheistic religions which assume that different people that worship different gods, I mean every city had a different god both Christianity and Islam insisted that there was one and only one true faith.

In this sense Christianity and Islam were inherently intolerant in the way that the ancient religions were not, but whether or not sanctioned by scripture the result was a millennium of religious strife and bloodshed. In the west the era of religious wars

slowly gave way to the enlightenment. For the enlightenment thinkers tolerance was not merely instrumental, it was a human right, thus was born the modern ideal of tolerance the one that we are familiar with, persecution was not only bad strategy it violated one of the fundamental rights of man. The Dutch Republic was the first European state to embrace the new tolerance, in 1579 the United Provinces of the Netherlands declared in its founding charter that each person shall remain free in his religion and no one shall be investigated or persecuted because of its religion, almost overnight the Dutch Republic became a magnet for religious refugees from all over Europe. French Huguenots, German Lutherans, Mennonites, Quakers, Pilgrims. Of the tens of thousands of immigrants that poured in, two groups in particular were pivotal to Holland's rise, first were the Jewish bankers, merchants and diamond traders fleeing Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions, these men among the richest in the world financiers to Europe's royalty, bank rollers of armies termed Amsterdam into the worlds commercial and financial center. Second and even more important with the protestant industrialist and artisans from Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels, who brought with them not only the wealth but critical industrial secrets the worlds most advanced textile technology and as Max Vabor would later put it, 'In the spirit of capitalism itself'. With the decisive contributions of these two groups the Dutch still became a financial and technological and commercial leaders of the world, fared away the richest nation on earth with a global trading empire and an unheard of degree of upper mobility. But even so, I can feel it in the room, was the tiny Dutch Republic really a hyper power? After all it didn't have the large withstanding army

in Europe it had the second largest army, well I think the answer is yes and I am happy to make the case during Q&A, for now, let me just say that the rise of the Dutch Republic marked a dramatic transformation in the nature of both world power and tolerance, with the Dutch, commerce replaced conquest as the driving engine of wealth creation and immigration, replaced invasion and annexation as the best way to incorporate the worlds best and brightest. Tolerance was equally essentially to Great Britain, the successors to the Dutch on the world stage, for most of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries what is now Great Britain was a pitch of vicious, religious and ethnic warfare. Protestants massacred Catholics, Catholics beheaded Protestants, Englishmen slaughtered Irish Scots and Welsh all of whom retaliated in kind. There was no persecution of Jews because there were no Jews, they had all been expelled in 1290, all this was to change after 1689 in that year Parliament passed the Bill of Rights and the Act of Toleration, twenty years later England united with Scotland and Wales and despite continuing anti Catholic brutality in bigotry by the early 18th century Great Britain had replaced the Dutch Republic in reputation as the most tolerant nation in Europe, because of England's turn to tolerance after 1689 three groups in particular Jews, Huguenots and most importantly Scots were able to enter into British society with unprecedented freedom, the benefits to great Britain were immediate. England became the new heaven for Europe's Jews who with astonishing rapidity founded the London Stock Exchange, brought diamond and bullion trading to Britain and almost single handedly made London the worlds new financial center, meanwhile the Scots

became Great Britain's chief empire builders and the driving force in Britain's industrial revolution, the most critical invention of the era, the Watt steam engine, the hot glass furnace, the integrated cotton mill were all created by Scots who incidentally were also Britain's leading thinkers and writers, David Hume and Adam Smith were both Scots, there is a reason no one ever talks about the English enlightenment but they do of course talk about the Scottish enlightenment. But if Great Britain followed the Dutch formula of tolerance at home it basically pursued a Roman strategy abroad. The British like the Romans conquered, annexed and colonized with India of course as the jewel of the empire. Like the Romans the British were masters of harnessing and co-opting local elites and exploiting local manpower, filling its imperial army with native soldiers in the First World War more than a million Indians served the empire abroad but British tolerance too had limits and could not cross, at home the problem was Catholic Ireland, abroad the problem was racism, the British could never quite treat their non white colonies the same way they treated their white dominions, these limits on British tolerance, these failures to live up to its own enlightenment ideals would come back to haunt the empire, helping to tear it apart in the 20th century, meanwhile another power itself a former British colony was rising, this brings me at last of course to the United States. Now of America's ascent to hyper power status I am going to say almost nothing here, if my thesis is correct then the secret to world dominance lies in relative tolerance that is the ability to attract the world's best and brightest talent, then the United States as a nation of immigrants founded on the principle of tolerance has always had their leg up. To be sure while the United States

has always been relatively religiously tolerant it demonstrated extreme racial and ethnic intolerance for much of its history, most notably toward native Americans, African Americans and other non whites, it was only after the second world war with Brown versus Board of Education and the civil right revolution that the United States began developing however fitfully and imperfectly into one of the most ethnically and racially open societies in world history. Not coincidentally this was also the period in which the United States achieved world dominance, now in my book, I do try to make the case that America's growth and success, from its westward expansion, to its industrial explosion to the atomic bomb, to Silicon Valley and its domination of the computer age were to a very large extent, immigrant contributions but I am not going to try to make that case today. Instead what I would like to do now is to return to the 21st century and conclude by talking about some of the major challenges I see facing the United States today. September 11th changed many things in America, one of the things it did was that it put the talk of empire back on the table as a potentially desirable thing. A month after the world trade center attack a much quoted essay appeared in the Weekly Standard entitled 'The case for American empire' arguing that the most realistic response to terrorism is for America to embrace its imperial role. A year later the White House issued a new national security strategy emphasizing "the essential rule of American military strength" and declaring a commitment to maintaining American unipolar military preeminence. In 2004 the economist Deepak Lal published a book called 'In Praise of Empires' warning of the global consequences "if the US public does not recognize the imperial burden that history

has thrust upon it" at around the same time British historian Neil Ferguson called on the United States to get over its imperial denial and take on the civilizing and modernizing mission, that Great Britain had carried in centuries passed.

Now what exactly do these proponents of an American empire have in mind when they use the term, obviously no one is calling for President Bush to be named emperor of the middle east as Queen Victoria was named as an American empire seems to refer to be aggressive interventionist use of American military force with or without international approval to effect regime change and nation building to replace dictatorships, rogue states and other threatening regimes with pro market, pro democracy and pro American governments.

This is a position supported not only by so called Neil conservatives but also by many influential liberals especially in the period before and immediately after the invasion of Iraq.

But these calls for an American empire have all missed something crucial and that is history.

For all of the worlds enormous changes of the last two thousand years the United States today faces the same fundamental problem confronted by every hyper power in history but precisely because it is a modern democratic hyper power the US is especially ill equipped to deal with this problem, let me explain. Every hyper power in history has faced a difficulty that for the lack of the problem of glue, that is the problem of finding ways to generate goodwill, cooperation and ideally loyalty among the foreign peoples that are conquered and dominated.

Histories first hyper power, never solved this problem as the Persian empire expanded and it came to include increasingly diverse peoples and yet the empire had no overarching political

identity or glue to unite it, only sheer military might held it together in fact, ironically the same tolerance that allowed the Persians to assemble their mighty empire also encouraged their subject peoples to preserve their own languages and their own identities and their own political affiliations, so under 'Persian' rule Greeks and Egyptians certainly did feel Persian, they didn't feel proud to be a part of the Persian empire as a result less than a century after its founding the empire was driven by fragmentation and separate as rebellions when a stronger and more charismatic military leader Alexander of Macedon swept through the region, elites throughout the empire simply switched their allegiance they were not traders because they had never been patriots.

A similar faith beveled the Mongols with no common identity to bind together its European, Middle Eastern and Asian conquered peoples who were disgusted by their Barbarian overlords the Mongol world empire quickly splintered into four large kingdoms before breaking up all together.

Of all of histories hyper powers only Rome solved this problem, Great Britain actually came pretty close to a lesser extent I think but only Rome really perfectly solved this problem which goes a long way I think in explaining its spectacular longevity. Now it's very popular these days to compare the United States to Rome and it's a great comparison in many ways but ancient Rome had one huge advantage over the United States, it could make, Rome could make the people it conquered and dominated part of the Roman empire. Defeated peoples from Scotland to Spain to West Africa all became subjects of the greatest power on earth. Even more significantly Rome turned large numbers of conquered men both elites and common soldiers into Roman citizens clothed with a high status and privileges that such citizenship entailed.

By extending citizenship to Britain, Gaul's and Africans alike Rome managed to Romanize vastly different peoples living continents apart, creating a common political identity generating loyalty among its far-flung subjects. The United States can do no such thing because it's a democracy the United States does not try or want to make foreign populations its subjects and certainly not its citizens so when the US government speaks of bringing democracy to the Middle East it is not contemplating the people of Baghdad and Volusia voting in the next US presidential elections. This then is America's dilemma, as a hyper power America does not only dominate Americans but outside its borders there was no political glue binding the United States to the billions of people who live under its shadow. The great mistake made by those championing in American empire lies in assuming that the spread markets democracy and American brands and consumer culture would be enough to Americanize the nations of the world creating common values and even a desire for American leadership, this assumption was as naive as the belief that liberated Iraqis for going to greet American troops with candy and flowers. Wearing a Yankee's baseball cap and drinking coco cola does not turn a Palestinian into an American. Today the United States faces billions of people around the world most of them poor who want to be like Americans but don't want to be under Americas thumb, who want to dress and live like Americans but who are denied visas by the US embassy, who were told over and over that America stands for freedom, but sees only the American pursuit of self interest. For all these reasons an American empire is deeply ill considered even from the point of view of Americas own interests, while the United States certainly has had its imperialist moments we have plenty of stains on our history, it is not through imperialism that America became the worlds richest

and strongest nation. On the contrary the secret to America's success has always been its ability to attract and reward enterprising individuals of all backgrounds and skin colors. Moreover in today's world in aggressively militaristic hyper power incurs massive costs whether measured in terms of money spent, lives lost, legitimacy squandered or hatred provoked, without any of the benefits that accrued empires of the past, I mean not even the biggest hawk today is talking about piping Iraq's oil directly to Texas which is what Roman is going to do, when the Rome conquered Romania it acquired one million pounds of silver and gold. The face of an American empire today is present day Iraq, hundreds of thousands of US troops caught far from home in the middle of a sectarian war disliked and targeted on all sides with no obvious upside or even concrete objectives insight. To be clear I am not making an argument for America to embrace pacifism or isolationism, terrorism may require strong military measures and ethnic cleansing or other crimes against humanity, it may also justify military intervention. My argument rather is against empire building or some people call it democratization or regime change, the use of America's dominant military abroad to unilaterally and preemptively effect regime change and remake other nations by imposing American style institutions. In closing I think that internally or domestically the biggest challenge for the United States is whether we can remain a tolerant nation that is avoid descending into sort of fear based xenophobia and intolerance. On the international front and I think in a way for me this is the more serious challenge, I think the crucial question for the years and decades to come will be whether America can address this problem

that I have called glue,
are there creative ways whether
institutional or commercial or through
some marriage of constitutional and
international law through which
the United States can without losing
its sovereignty create a kind
of common identity with billions
of people around the world it dominates,
giving others more of a stake in Americas
success and leadership.
Ironically it maybe that the only way
the United States can remain
a hyper power is if it stops trying
so hard to be one.
But if America is destined to remain
a hyper power in the 21st century and
I am happy I have a chapter about
the implications of my thesis for some
of the challenges on the scene namely
the China the EU but if America is
destined to remain a hyper power in
the 21st century its my own view that
it should remain a hyper power, that it
should be a hyper power of opportunity,
dynamism and moral force and
not hyper power of empire
in military force, thank you,
I am happy to take questions.
You know my book has really sort
of contrary and predictions for China
so let me explain.
What I think is that its almost certain
that China will continue to just
explode economically,
it is doing everything right in some ways
but we are doing so much wrong I mean it
is pouring money into R&D and education,
it actually is trying to address
this problem of lack of creativity I mean,
it's kind of funny, I mean
from the top down we are going to
get creative but they have programs,
they are doing much better on
the foreign relations front you know
they are able to invest Genocide Sudan
and yet if you take international poles
and majorities in Europe, Canada,
Australia, Russia all have a more
favorable opinion of China then they
do with the United States,
so they are doing a lot right but if
my thesis is correct that to be
a hyper power that is a world hegemon

you have got to be able to pull in
the worlds best and brightest talent,
China can't become a hyper power,
they can become a super power but
it can't become a hyper power and
that's because China is quintessentially
ethnically based nation,
it's the opposite of an immigrant nation,
now its got tons of multinationals
in there, its more cosmopolitan than
its been since the seventh century
but the foreigners in China now are
not trying to become Chinese citizens
I mean they are still Americans
or Japanese so while you still do
see large numbers of Chinese,
talented skilled Chinese wanting
to move to the United States and
become American citizens you
don't see large numbers of European
and American engineers moving to China
to try to become Chinese citizens so
now this doesn't mean by the way
I think what's likely to happen is that
even if China doesn't become
a hyper power but it continues to rise
and become more and more powerful
and maybe India and Russia or the EU
its possible that we will, that the US
will fall from its hyper power status
that is that we will go back to a world
of a multi polar world where you have
several nations all of roughly
comparable strength with no one power
dominating so I think that could happen
but now to be fair I don't think China
has any interest in being a hyper power,
you know because that being
a hyper power these days brings
a lot of burdens and as I think we
are learning the hard way and I think
its very happy just becoming
an economic super power making
a lot of money, developing and
so that's my own view, yeah.
Yeah, yes you know its so funny
its – I think it's a really smart question
because you practically quote a passage
in my book I asked that I say if and
by the way that would be the exception
that would be a way to prove
my thesis wrong if that happened,
you know my thesis is not falsifiable if
that happened and I actually that

I said no but China is different because first of all its got a fifth of the worlds population, right I mean its got one point three billion people, does it need more people also Chinese communities around the world are famously entrepreneurial and etcetera, etcetera. Right but I don't think hyper power means just having the most foot soldier these days yeah so let me say why I don't think it can. First of all for twenty years, the last twenty years everybody that China sent out the vast majority of them wanted to stay. For the first time and this is telling in the last five years this just started to change, China is attracting these people back with western style perks, condo's, limo's and really for the first time some are going back but I think we hear so much in this country, maybe its part of the paranoia its really important to remember that China in many ways you just, have to go to the rural areas its still a developing country in many ways I mean you just there are really hundreds of millions of people very, very uneducated in fact I think I have a statistic in my book that ninety, it's a tiny amount percentage of the population attends high school so its not everything that you hear, also even with those best and widest that are some sort of going back, many still don't want to go back because there is still so much corruption and mis feeling that its not a level playing field that actually the most talented often still want to come to the United States, I mean we don't experience this because we just like there is so much going wrong but we remain really that destination of choice for many, many people if we don't mess this up which we look like we are doing by making it so hard to give out visa's, final point on this, the real reason I think that China can't become a hyper power is because my thesis says that the best at any point in time

the smartest most creative and most driven most, whatever people are never going to be found in one ethnic group, they are not just going to be all Chinese, they are just – I just don't think so but just I would like to – I just don't think they are, you have got to be able to pull in China, when China is able to pull in the best person from Morocco, the best person from France, the best person Brazil and they want to be Chinese citizens I think that will be the day that it could really replace the US. Interesting, the first question is easier for me because I actually don't, I think that was the mistake, I think the mistake of a lot of people championing in an aggressive military strategy was that they thought that people ate McDonalds and wore baseball caps and like Starbucks and loved our Hollywood films that that would make us want American leadership and that's non secretor you know in fact that just that kind of love hate relationship is just the source of a lot of frustration and anger so point one I don't think that just liking American brand names is enough of the glue that's, you need something more, I mean the Romans they have to have that cultural thing but they had the citizenship to give and we just can't do that. On your second point of cosmopolitanism I just have to think about that a little bit, I don't think I have a really smart answer for that I mean I have to think about that a little bit you know -. Yeah and I guess in a way my thesis is that cosmopolitanism is the only way to become globally dominant and that actually makes a nice sort of esthetic sense because cosmos is the worlds that to be world dominant, you have to be sort of world embracing and worlds loving and I guess so in a way maybe that's the way to think it but that's definitely the thesis to try any society that embraces ethnic purity or religious purity or tribalism can't

become globally dominant but again not every society wants to be globally dominant.

I have friends especially in Scandinavia when I was writing this book they said what is the problem with you Americans I mean who wants to be a hyper power you know who would care I would rather my country be known as

the most just country or the you know so that's another question, yes?

Yeah, yeah that's true, yeah well first of all the first point on how about Americas the massive industrial complex, military complex for me that one is easy, I think that the people who think that militarism has been the secret to American success to have the horse before the car, I mean the car before the horse.

I think that the reason we are so militarily dominant is because of our technological dominance and because our technological dominance is directly related to Silicon Valley, the microchip, the digital revolution and that's all so much an immigrant contribution story so

I think that's how we got to be militarily dominant and just on your other point I mostly just agree with you I mean I that's one of the points of the book you know my

I think immigrants, immigrants child you especially feel this, opening and closing of my book, my grandfather and you know, when my parents came here they loved this country, everybody loved this country, my grandfather at age 99 you know before he died desperately wanted to take a citizenship test even though he lived here for 40 years as a permanent resident he just said I want to be an American citizen you know it's the greatest country and so I mean that's one of the motivating reasons for writing the book I just think so much good will has been squandered.

Yes and that could be, I mean that by the way there are many reasons for decline, my story on decline is that

only intolerance causes decline, I have a very strong causality on the rise, tolerance is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the achievement of world dominance. On the decline story there are many different reasons for decline investing and moreover extending our healthcare, it could be any of those things bad leaders, but I just simply say that decline repeatedly has coincided with the turn intolerance and it could be that you are already in decline and that this intolerance is a byproduct or it could be that this turned to intolerance in some cases it actually feels the decline, yes. Yeah well I, nothing in my book is inconsistent with that I very much agree, first of all I just want to say on natural resources that I hope its obvious that tolerance is a necessary but not sufficient condition I mean a lot of a, the stars have to be aligned to be a hyper power you know, like its very unlikely that you know the kingdom of Bhutan will become a hyper power because of geography, natural resources and United States has been very blessed and we do seem to be in many ways making a big mess of it, so all I have to say on your question is that I think those are all other reasons that the United States could decline, absolutely you know, but it is just not the focus of my book, because I am talking about how you can become hyper power. Yes? Oh no, you will see my chapter on India those are – that was extreme intolerance by the British and I talk about even just putting aside morality just how stupid it was strategically for them I mean as late the First World War Gandhi said we are proud, this is what I meant by the glue, we are imperial, we are just subjects, the Indians fought for the British and all they wanted was to be treated like Australia and Canada to be given what they had been promised and instead they you know, I mean, I believe that India

was a case of failed tolerance and that the British, of course the Indians suffered far too but the British strategically suffered more. My point is that the British early on, almost during the time when they were even before it was I mean just with the army were very, very strategically tolerant in taking it over from the Moguls, the Mogul empire because at that point the co-opted all the very successful English sorry, Indian business people they did I think, they built their civil service with huge numbers of Indians that's how they, it was very Roman, that's how they controlled so much land by co-opting the native populations by talent so at its best it was actually that's what I referred to you know on its rise but I very much agree with you about that.

Okay all right. Yes?

That is the hardest question, well first of all I just internally you know with a lot of the anti-immigration things I mean I just think the lot of the stuff that you hear about on talk radio when that is driving a lot of the elections and everything they are just straw man you know its kind of playing on peoples fear and really bad I mean I think that what I mean straw man I think that it goes without saying that national security should come first you know I mean its they kind of – people kind of used that as – you want the terrorists? No! National security should come first it goes without saying that we have to have the right to restrict our borders just can't let everybody in, it goes without saying I think that illegal immigration is a problem you know you have to find, its not fair, you have to find out a solution so but I think a lot of people just want to go a lot further and play on this fear and paranoia and scapegoating, which is from my, what my book suggested, is that is a very bad sign, so internally, I would say not moving in that direction would

be definitely the way I would recommend, externally I think it's a lot harder my first book 'World on Fire' suggested that. I mean to be here you have remember its not all the Iraq war, 09/11 happened before the Iraq war so there has been anti-Americanism here and part of that has to do with being a hyper power you know part of that has to do with middle east policies and you know cultural dominance I mean there are so many reasons for anti-Americanism some are fault, some are not, I do think that our post 09/11 policies have made it much, much harder, much, much harder to have this kind of glue that we really need which would include I mean to put it this way Rome was so good at making all of its subjects feel that if Rome prospered they would prosper too and I think United States has just done a terrible job on this, I am kind of optimist maybe I work with nice students, I believe, I just see people going, Americans going to the Peace core in NGO's and human rights. I mean people are you know I just feel that there is a lot of good that America has done and so for us to have this reputation as worse then China that its happily investing in Sudan you know it just shows that we have just done something terribly wrong I mean really so that's not a complete answer of that.

Yes?

Yeah, interesting well that's a hard question for me, my first book actually argued about the dangers of trying to democratize developing countries without knowing anything about them or understanding the other ethnic and economic and religious structures because its just not that easy, you can't plug in democracy like a light ball you know and people were talking that way a lot of people told we will just – if we just airlift in a stock exchange into Baghdad then the Shiites and Sunnies will you know become consumers, and it just, so I think that the

term freedom, first of all I think we
all favored a theory but I think it's
a dangerous thing to throw on,
it's an excuse we can invade people
because of freedom,
I mean its just too vague you know,
you have to remember that this
is the first book that "Slobodan Milosevic"
genocidal leader was elected in free
and fair elections you know, so its
you know what is freedom?
and what I don't think democracy
you know Hamas was selected in
the Palestine authority so I think
you know I don't have a good answer
for you there too, but
asking that question
sort of opens up more questions
then it answers okay thank you.